IN THE SPECIFICATION:

Please amend the sentence beginning on line 4 of page 2 as follows:

-- The use of heating of an intervertebral disc to relieve pain is described in the patent entitled "Method and Apparatus for Heating an Intervertebral Disc for Relief of Back Pain" by Menno E. Sluijter and Eric R. Cosman, U.S. Pat. No. [4,433,739] 5,433,739, issued Jul. 18, 1995, and in the patent entitled "Thermal [Dinnervation] Denervation of an Intervertebral Disc for Relief of Back Pain" by Menno E. Sluijter and Eric R. Cosman, U.S. Pat. No. 5,571,147, issued Nov. 5, 1996.--

Please amend the sentence beginning on line 5 of page 2 as follows:

-- Both U.S. Pat. Nos. [4,433,739] 5,433,739 and 5,571,147 are incorporated herein by reference.--

Please amend the sentence beginning on line 16 of page 2 as follows:

--The Oratec instrumentation includes a flexible catheter which is introduced into the nucleus [pulposis] pulposus and manipulated about an inner wall of the annulus [fibrosis] fibrosus.--

Please amend the sentence beginning on line 17 of page 2 as follows:

--A functional element of the catheter treats the nucleus [pulposis] pulposus tissue.--

Please amend the sentence beginning on line 22 of page 2 as follows:

--There is some innervation of the intervertebral disc near the surface of the disc and also within its outer portion known as the annulus [fibrous] fibrosus.--

Please amend the paragraph beginning on line 1 of page 4 as follows:

-- The present disclosure is directed to an apparatus for treating an intervertebral disc having an inner nucleus [pulpous] pulposus and an outer annulus [fibrous] fibrosus. In general, the apparatus includes a thermal probe defining proximal and distal ends and having a guidable region adjacent the distal end thereof. The guidable region is characterized by having sufficient rigidity to advance within the annulus [fibrous] fibrosus of the intervertebral disc in response to an axial force exerted on the proximal end of the thermal probe while having sufficient flexibility to substantially follow and conform to an azimuthal course defined by the natural striata of the annulus [fibrous] fibrosus. The thermal probe is adapted for connection to a thermal energy source to provide thermal energy to the annulus [fibrous] fibrosus to alleviate pain associated with the intervertebral disc. Preferably, the guidable region includes a thermal transmitting element for transmitting thermal energy to the intervertebral disc. The guidable region may include a helical spring. --

Please amend the sentence beginning on line 14 of page 4 as follows:

-- The cannula may include an arcuate end portion which is dimensioned to arrange the guidable region of the thermal probe at a desired orientation within the annulus [fibrous] fibrosus.--

Please amend the sentence beginning on line 22 of page 4 as follows:

-- The method includes the steps of introducing a thermal transmitting element of a thermal probe into the annulus [fibrous] fibrosus of the intervertebral disc and supplying thermal energy from a thermal energy source to the thermal transmitting element to heat the annulus [fibrous] fibrosus adjacent the transmitting element sufficiently to relieve pain associated with the intervertebral disc. --

Please amend the sentence beginning on line 6 of page 6 as follows:

-- The cannula tip 5 is inserted into the intervertebral disc ID and is placed in the outer annular portion A, referred to as the annulus [fibrous] fibrosus of the disc.--

Please amend the sentence beginning on line 9 of page 6 as follows:

-- In the interior of the disc, inside of the dashed line in FIG. 1, is the NU nucleus or nucleus [pulposis] pulposus of the disc, which has a softer consistency than the annulus.--

Please amend the sentence beginning on line 6 of page 14 as follows:

-- Accordingly, it is an advantage, in accordance with the present invention, that a cannula can be placed in the posterior or posterior-lateral portion of the disc and a thermal probe can be directed from that point across the posterior margin and into the contralateral posterior-lateral portion of the disc by a direct pathway along, e.g., the natural striata of the annulus [fibrosis] fibrosus A.--